

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON ANTOINE RUFFENACHT,

NEWLY-APPOINTED STATE SECRETARY ATTACHED TO THE

PRIME MINISTER

REF: PARIS 25052

1. ANTOINE RUFFENACHT ENTERS THE BARRE CABINET, AT 38 YEARS OF AGE, AS THE JUNIOR MEMBER. BORN OF AN OLD MERCHANT FAMILY IN LE HAVRE, WHICH HAD EMIGRATED FROM NORTHEASTERN FRANCE, RUFFENACHT STUDIED AT THE FACULTY OF LAW AND THE INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL STUDIES BEFORE ENTERING ENA IN 1966. UPON GRADUATION FROM THAT PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOL TWO YEARS LATER, HE BEGAN HIS CAREER IN THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE. WHEN OLIVIER GUICHARD, JUST NAMED MINISTER OF JUSTICE, BECAME MINISTER OF EDUCATION IN JUNE 1969, RUFFENACHT ENTERED HIS CABINET AS A TECHNICAL ADVISOR AND FOLLOWED GUICHARD THREE YEARS LATER INTO HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT AS MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, EQUIPMENT, HOUSING AND TOURISM. HE WAS ALREADY A UDR MILITANT, THE "SUPPLEANT" (REPLACEMENT) OF MAURICE

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GEORGES, THEN UDR DEPUTY FROM THE SEINE-MARITIME. WHEN

GEORGES RESIGNED FOR HEALTH REASONS IN JUNE 1975, RUFFENACHT RAN IN THE LEGISLATIVE BY-ELECTION IN LE HAVRE, A STRONGHOLD OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AND WITH THE DIRECT ASSISTANCE OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC AND OTHER UDR BIG GUNS, ROUNDLY WHIPPED DANIEL COLLIARD, HIS COMMUNIST OPPONENT AND CURRENT ASSISTANT MAYOR OF THAT CITY. WHEN YVES GUENA TOOK OVER AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UDR IN APRIL 1976, RUFFENACHT, ALREADY KNOWN FOR HIS SHARP POLITICAL NOSE, WAS APPOINTED ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL IN CHARGE OF ELECTIONS. THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF HIS ASSIGNMENT WAS TO PREPARE THE PARTY FOR THE 1977 MUNICIPAL AND 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. RUFFENACHT HAS OPENLY DECLARED HIS INTENTION OF RUNNING IN NEXT YEAR'S MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AGAINST INCUMBENT COMMUNIST MAYOR OF LE HAVRE ANDRE DUROME, A COURAGEOUS AMBITION ON HIS PART IN VIEW OF LOCAL COMMUNIST STRENGTH. HE IS ALREADY RECONCILED TO THE FACT THAT HE WILL PROBABLY LOSE.

2. IN PRIVATE BUSINESS RUFFENACHT IS ALSO ACTIVE AS PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETE INTEROCEANIQUE. HE BELONGS TO THE PROTESTANT ESTABLISHMENT AND HAS TIES WITH SUCH LEADING BUSINESS FAMILIES AS THE BAUMGARTNERS AND THIERRY-MEIGS. HE WAS NOMINATED FOR A LEADER GRANTEE IN MAY OF THIS YEAR, BUT TO DATE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO GO TO THE U.S. NEVERTHELESS RUFFENACHT, WELL KNOWN TO EMBASSY OFFICIALS, PASSED SIX MONTHS IN THE U.S. SOME YEARS AGO AT THE INVITATION OF THE LA FAYETTE FOUNDATION IN BOSTON. THE PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP WAS APPARENTLY TO MEET AMERICANS AND LEARN ABOUT THE U.S. RUFFENACHT SPEAKS ENGLISH FAIRLY WELL. HE IS MARRIED TO A WOMAN FROM AN OLD LYON FAMILY AND HAS TWO CHILDREN; IN PERSONAL CONTACT HE IS OPEN, SOMETIMES TO THE POINT OF INDISCRETION. HE IS ALSO A VOLUBLE OBSERVER OF THE INTERNAL FRENCH POLITICAL SCENE. IN HIS CURRENT POST HE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED THE SPECIFIC TASK OF PREPARING THE MAJORITY FOR FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS AND, IN VIEW OF HIS WELL REVEALED TALENTS AS A GOOD NAVIGATOR IN ELECTORAL WATERS, WE EXPECT THAT HIS VIEWS ON MAJORITY ELECTORAL TACTICS WILL RECEIVE THE CAREFUL ATTENTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND

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THE PRESIDENT. ONE OF CHIRAC'S FAIR-HAIRED BOYS, RUFFENACHT, WHO MET WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL ONLY HOURS AFTER THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER'S RESIGNATION, WAS ADAMANT IN INSISTING THAT THE PRESS HAD MADE MORE OF CHIRAC'S WRATH THAN WAS MERITED. HE FEELS HIS MENTOR WILL BE BACK IN THE POLITICAL LIMELIGHT BEFORE TOO LONG A TIME HAS ELAPSED, BUT ALSO HASTENED TO ASSURE US THAT THE UDR WOULD SIT TIGHT IN THE MAJORITY AND FOLLOW, WITH AS E

LITTLE GROWLING AS POSSIBLE, THE POLICIES OF THE NEW
PRIME MINISTER.
RUSH

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